CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Prevailing Drought Conditions in Different Parts of the Country

SHRI N. E. BALRAM (KERALA) : Madam, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the prevailing drought conditions in different parts of the country. *.....(Interruption).....*

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Balram, please call the attention.

SHRI N. E. BALRAM : Everybody is shouting. You are also joining them. What can I do ? I don't have any voice. You are also shouting along with them.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Balram, please sit down. Don't pass comments. Mr. Jakhar, he has called your attention. *.....(Interruption).....*

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR) : Madam, according to the forecast made by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for the South-West Monsoon of 1993 the quantum of rainfall for the country as a whole during the monsoon period is likely to be 103% of the long period average value within the estimated model error of ± 4%. There is an expectation that around 30 out of 35 meteorological sub-divisions in the country should get normal or excess rainfall.

The South-West Monsoon which had set in Kerala on 28th May, 1993 which was about three days earlier than its normal date, covered the entire country by 5th July, 1993. During the period June 1—July 28, 1993 the cumulative rainfall was excess or normal in 28 out of 35 meterological sub-divisions and 70% of the districts in the country. Rainfall was deficient in the remaining 7 meteorological sub-divisions of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Bihar Plains, Plains of West Uttar Pradesh, East Madhya Pradesh, Saurashtra, Kutch, Marathwada and Coastal Andhra Pradesh. The deficiency of rainfall, was however, marginal in all the sub-divisions except in Bihar Plains where it is 33%. There is no meteorological sub-division falling in scanty category.

Since June 1, 1993 the cumulative rainfall for the country never went below 100% of the long period average. During this period the country has received 46.53 cm. of rainfall against its normal rain of 43.92 cm. This is 106% of the country's long period average rainfall for this period. While the performance of the monsoon is in line with the seasonal forecast, its temporal and spatial distribution caused floods in several North and North-Western States as also in Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala and Maharashtra.

When these parts of the country are affected by floods, some other areas are experiencing adverse seasonal conditions and drought conditions because of uneven distribution of rains. Drought conditions prevail in parts of Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. No State has reported any major losses due to drought conditions though there are reports of late sowing and moisture stress conditions in some of these States. The inadequacy of rainfall has affected crop coverage in most of these areas. A final picture with regard to coverage/transplantation may, however, emerge after a couple of weeks and if the rainfall improve over these deficient areas in the next week or two, the situation may undergo a change.

Government of Bihar has reported continuing drought conditions in 309 blocks of 44 districts of the State. The districts of Palamau, Chatra and Lohardaga are the worst affected. The Government of Orissa has reported that due to long dry spell during the second fortnight of July, sown crops have dried up in most areas of the State. Drought conditions are also reported to be developing in the districts of Phulbani, Ganjam, Malkanagiri, Koraput, Nowrangpur, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sundargarh and Raigarh. Madhya Pradesh has reported adverse seasonal conditions in Rewa Division as also in the district of Gwalior and Chambal. Andhra Pradesh has reported that drought conditions continue to be severe in the districts of Cuddapah, Nalgonda, Mehboobnagar and Rangareddy. In all, 11 districts in the State have experienced deficient rainfall during the current monsoon. Karnataka has reported drought conditions in 14 out of the 20 districts in the State. Karnataka has identified severely affected areas and has started employment generation works and supply of drinking water in the affected villages. Uttar Pradesh has reported subdued agricultural operations/ adverse seasonal conditions in the 7 districts of Allahabad, Fatehpur, Banda, Kanpur, Balia, Unnao and Pratapgarh. Gujarat has reported deficient rain and moisture stress conditions

in the districts of Kutch, Junagarh, Jamnagar and Rajkot. Maharashtra has informed that 8 districts in the State i.e. Sindhudurga, Solapur, Aurangabad, Beed, Nanded, Osmanabad, Latur and Wardha have received inadequate rainfall during the South-West Monsoon and unless the rainfall situation further improves in the next week or two, the agricultural operations in these districts would be severely hampered.

After receiving the forecast for the South-West Monsoon a model contingency plan was circulated to all the States in the first week of June itself. Accordingly, the States have prepared contingency plans to meet any eventuality due to aberration of monsoon. Various programmes such as introduction of water budgeting, energy management, delivery of agricultural inputs and providing extension support have been evolved to ensure necessary critical agricultual inputs at the farm level to support contingency crop plan. The developing situation in the rainfall deficient areas is being monitored on a continuing basis.

In the wake of adverse seasonal conditions and deficiency in rainfall during the South-West Monsoon 1992, the States of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh had submitted Memoranda to the Central Government, seeking Central assistance to undertake adequate drought relief measures in the affected areas. Advance releases of Central share of Calamity Relief Fund (C.R.F.) were made to the affected States. Besides, enhanced allocations were made under the on-going plan programmes such as JRY, ARWSP, Wasteland Development Programme, Crop Production Programmes, etc. The Prime Minister has himself visited the drought affected areas of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

The IX Finance Commission recognising the need for greater autonomy and responsibility for the State Governments in managing the challenges posed by recurrent natural calamities had recommended the creation of C.R.F. to be operated by the State Governments. 75% of the CRF is contributed by the Government of India and the 25% is contributed by the State Governments concerned in four quarterly instalments. Annual contribution to the State CRF is released in four quarterly instalments. Two quarterly instalments of the Central share of CRF during the current year has been released to all the States, including States affected by floods and droughts. Advance quarterly instalment of CRF have been released to the States of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, advance releases are also being made to the States of Bihar and Karnataka to augment their resources in mounting inadequate relief measures.

The State Governments are closely monitoring the developing adverse situation. Some of the State Governments have already initiated action to generate rural employment in the affected areas and for providing drinking water. Drought prevention measures like watershed development programme in dryland areas, soil conservation works have also been initiated under the on-going plan programmes.

I fully share the concerns expressed by the Hon'ble Members regarding the sufferings of the people affected by adverse seasonal conditions and drought in different parts of the country. I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the House that the Government of India will ensure that all possible assistance is extended to the State Governments in fully meeting the exigencies of the situation.

[The Vice-Chairman (Shri V. Narayanaswamy) in the chair]

SHRI T. A. MOHAMMED SAQHY: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the drought in Tamil Nadu has been totally neglected.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI V. NARAYANASWAMY): The hon. Member from your party will speak and the Minister will reply. Now, Mr. N. E. Balaram. You kindly speak.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I was listening to the statement made by the hon. Minister. But I am not happy about the position taken by the Government of India on this issue. Now, the hon. Minister has already very well explained. So, I need not go into the whole picture again. He has already explained about the drought situation prevailing in different parts of the country. Drought situation is prevailing in several States like Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and in Tamil Nadu also. I know that there is a drought situation in some areas of Tamil Nadu. Near-drought conditions are prevailing. That is a fact. In all these areas, the miseries of the common people are untold and this is natural because when the agricultural activities are not there in the villages, one can understand what will happen to the conditions of the poor people, especially to the agricultural workers and the

small peasants. When the drought conditions are there, one can understand the difficulties of these poor sections of the people will face. This situation is not a new one. Practically speaking, in some States like Bihar, Orissa and areas like Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh—I am only mentioning certain areas and certain States—this drought has become a regular feature. It is not coming once in a way. For instance, Bihar. My friends from Bihar will explain much more than I can do because they are coming from that area. According to my knowledge, the drought conditions in Bihar are there for the last three years in many areas and the fact that they are facing this situation successively for the last three years means, we can well imagine the conditions of the village poor. I am not talking about people who can afford to manage things, but I am talking especially about the poor people in the agricultural sector. This is coming as a regular feature. He should have taken note of this particular factor when he was trying to tackle this question.

(**The Deputy Chairman** in the chair)

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : I would like to say a few words about the conditions as such. The Minister only mentioned that drought conditions are prevailing in such and such areas and the Central Government has given some help and the State Governments are doing their best to give some lift to the people in the drought-affected areas. But I don't think this is the real picture. This may be partly true. I don't deny that the Central Government has given any money. It has given some money. I will come to that later. The State Governments are also doing something. But the ground reality is different. If we go to the drought-affected areas, we can see the conditions of the people, especially of the village people. Their miseries are increasing. A large number of people are migrating from the villages to the towns. According to newspaper reports—almost all newspapers have reported—this year, from Orissa alone, because of the drought situation in the villages, especially in the 11 districts which have been mentioned in the statement made by the hon. Minister, more than four lakh people have already migrated to different parts of the country seeking jobs. This is an unofficial record given by the newspapers. I do not know whether they would be able to go back. We do not know whether they are going and we do not know what will happen to them when they go to the towns also. We do not have a clear picture of what is happening to these people, lakhs of people. Because of the disruption in their village life, because of their inability to continue the agricultural activities, they have left their villages now seeking jobs in the urban areas. But this is not the case in Orissa. Really, this is what has been happening in Bihar for the last so many months. When we go to some of the colonies here in Delhi, we see a large number of Bihari people who have come here and are staying here. When I visited some of these areas some four weeks back, most of them were saying that they were from Bihar. I learnt that a large number of people, because of the difficult conditions, especially the drought conditions, in the villages, they were leaving their villages and were migrating to the towns and nobody can say how they are living in the towns and cities. But this is going on.

If we first take Bihar, according to the newspaper reports, excepting a very few districts, the entire State has been affected by drought and this is what the Chief Minister was also saying. I am told that the Chief Minister came here alongwith the Parliament Members of the affected areas and the Prime Minister had a long discussion with them. The Minister of Agriculture must be knowing it better than myself, must be knowing what the real conditions are. Excepting a few districts, most of the districts are facing drought conditions and this time, I am told—and it is also reported in the Press—that only one per cent of the land they were able to sow. They were able to do the sowing only in one per cent of the land which means that it is a very bad situation. If they are not able to do the sowing in the whole of the land, it is then a very bad situation. It is because of lack of rains. Of course, now they are getting some rains. That is good. But I do not know the effect of this scanty rain which they are getting now. No doubt, it will ease the situation a little. But even then the problems are there and will be there. It has also been reported in the papers that because of lack of water, people take water, whatever water is available, polluted and contaminated, and suffer from water-borne diseases and these diseases are found on a large scale in many districts in Bihar and Orissa, and in some districts in Karnataka also. It has been reported in the Press that because of insufficient rains, because of lack of drinking water, water-borne diseases are very much prevalent, very much wide-spread, in several areas and a large number of deaths have been reported from Orissa and Bihar. I do not have further information about the other States. According to one of the speeches made in the Bihar Assembly,

more than six hundred people have died due to water-borne diseases. That is what is happening there and that is also happening in Orissa. What I am saying is that the entire village life has been affected by this drought. There is no agricultural activity, there is no proper medical relief at proper time and there is no availability of drinking water and, because of these things, the people are migrating. They are selling their cattle because they cannot afford to purchase fodder for their cattle. A large number of these people cannot afford to purchase fodder for their cattle and so, they are selling their cattle. They might sell their small plots of land also if this situation continues. I do not know what will happen to the poor peasants and the small agricultural workers and also to the middle men, a large number of small people. This is the main question to which we must find an answer when we are trying to tackle this problem. This should be uppermost in our minds : how are we going to tackle the situation of these people who are facing serious problems in their life on every issue ? So, this is the situation now prevailing in many parts of the country. The Minister was speaking about the Calamity Relief Fund, suggested by the Ninth Finance Commission.

But I would like to know what the real position is with regard to this Calamity Relief Fund in different States. I know the conditions prevailing in Andhra Pradesh. I do not know the real situation about the CRF in Bihar. Almost the entire amount has been utilised by the Andhra Pradesh Government. Now, if you ask them to utilise that Fund again for tackling the drought situation, I do not know how they are going to meet the drought situation in the Royaleseema area. I had an occasion to visit that area. I was told that nothing was done in Andhra Pradesh as far as this drought-prone area is concerned. The State Government were not able to do anything. They did not do anything. In such a situation, I would like to ask the hon. Minister as to what the real solution is for that. These are the practical issues which we have to tackle. As far as Bihar is concerned, the Chief Minister was demanding about Rs. 500 crores or even more than that. In all these areas, we know the position of the State Governments. They are finding it difficult even to look after their ordinary affairs, their day-to-day administrative affairs because of lack of funds. This is the position with many States in our country. In such a situation, when the fury of nature comes in the form of drought and floods, how can they solve such problems unless the Central Government comes to their help in a big way ? I am not saying that the Central Government has got enough money to tackle these problems. It has its own limitations. Even then, this is a big problem that we are facing now. I am ashmed to speak, if it is true, that people are selling their children. I read in the newspapers. I could not go and visit the areas or verify the facts But it appeared in all the newspapers that in Orissa people are selling their children and the price of a child is Rs. 20/- only. Are we not ashamed of this situation ?

SHRI SARADA MOHANTY (Orissa) : They are selling their children for one Kg of rice.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : That is much worse. If that is the position, there is no use of accusing our people. It is a very serious problem. If we are selling our children, where are we heading for ? On the one side, we speak about the very many achievements of our country. I am not going to say that our country has not achieved anything. Our country has achieved very many things. But on the other side, the picture is very gloomy. It is very sad that people are selling their children or killing their children because they could not feed them, they could not maintain them. It is a very bad situation for the country. Specially in Orissa, there are certain areas where this drought has become almost a permanent feature. Every year it occurs with the result that entire villages are being ravaged by these repeated spells of drought. The village life itself is being disintegrated. Impoverishment is taking place. It is very much growing in most of the villages. So, what do we do about it ? It is not a problem of drought alone. It is difficult to tackle this problem in a normal way. Simply saying that the Ninth Finance Commission will find out a way is not enough. I don't think the Ninth Finance Commission can solve the problem. Of course, the Ninth Finance Commission was able to focus the attention on the problem of drought. They have already focused the attention on the problem by saying that there should be some fund to find a solution to this. That they have done. But more than that, they have done nothing. I would like to ask a simple question. In many of the drought-affected areas and nearly drought-affected areas, drinking water is not at all available. I am posing a simple question. We have a Technology Mission on drinking water working in this country for the last 5 or 6 years. What is the experience of this Technology Mission on the drinking water ? You please share with us. What is the situation ? The drought has become a nation-wide problem. Drinking water is not

available not only in the drought-affected areas; it is not available in other areas also. But I am confining myself only to the drought-affected areas. In the drought-affected areas we do not have facility to provide drinking water to the common people. How do we solve this problem? People are drinking polluted water resulting in water-borne diseases like malaria, diarrhoea and cholera and we have seen deaths on a mass scale. There is no hospital. There are no medicines available. You go to any hospital in the country. I was in a hospital for six days as a Member of Parliament and I know the condition of the hospitals. One of my friends who is a freedom fighter and who was with me in the jail was also there in that hospital. That is a first-class hospital, a medical college. And we were told by the people there that no medicines are available there and they are asked to purchase the medicines from outside. This is the position on the question of medicines. (*Time-bell rings*) I will finish. I have a few points more and I will finish.

What I was trying to say is that we have to tackle this problem in a different manner.

The Prime Minister visited many areas. He visited Orissa; he visited Madhya Pradesh and he visited Bihar also, or perhaps he may visit Bihar now. What did he do there? He promised Rs. 80 crores to Orissa. He went there; he saw the real conditions that prevailed and he promised Rs. 80 crores. But what is the Central Government doing? The Central Government gave them Rs. 78 crores, according to my information. The Prime Minister promised to give Rs. 80 crores immediately and you gave them only Rs. 78 crores from the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna. That may be helpful to the people there but I want to draw your attention to the fact as to how this money is spent. There is a report in the papers about it. The report says that the Drought-Prone Area Programme in Orissa, Kalahandi district, suffering from poverty and starvation deaths, has been marked by siphoning off crores of rupees and frittering away of the funds with no result. This has been discovered by the Assistant Collector of the district, Mr. Pradip Kumar Jain. This is what is happening there, and this is the reality. I do not know what the truth is but even if there is any element of truth in it as observed by the Assistant Collector that money spent under Jawahar Rozgar Yojna has been siphoned off and diverted for other purposes, what are we doing about it? You should check it up. How are you going to help the people if the money is siphoned off in this manner?

Then when the Prime Minister visited Madhya Pradesh, he promised Rs. 260 crores because he found that about 13 districts suffered from severe drought. He saw it by himself. He saw the whole condition and he promised Rs. 260 crores on the spot. What happened later? You gave about Rs. 68 crores from the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna, and now there is a big controversy. The Minister goes there and says: 'I do not know what the Prime Minister has promised but if he has promised, it will come'. I do not know whether the promise made was reported in the press or not. That controversy is going on there. At the same time, acute drought is there in several areas. They are not able to spend the money. In fact, they do not have much money. This is the situation to which I would like to draw the attention of the Government.

The point is the State Governments are not able to do much, are not able to help the people who are suffering from drought, because of the financial constraint and because their own machinery is not fit enough to do the job. Of course, they might have done something. I do not say that they have not done anything. But what is required is not being done. The State Governments are not able to meet the requirements of the people in regard to their rehabilitation so that they can come out of this crisis. I do not think the State Governments are in a position to tackle this problem. On the other side, the Central Government also has not taken up this issue seriously. This is my opinion.

I would suggest that firstly, you should give them some immediate relief. The Central Government must give some immediate relief on the basis of the requirements assessed by your own people who have gone their and studied the situation. They must have submitted their report. If not, the State Governments themselves must have submitted their report. Unless the Central Government gives some substantial help, the State Governments will not be able to give relief to the people in the various villages who have been affected by drought. This is the real situation. As to how you can do it, it is for you to think about it and do the needful.

The second thing I would like to suggest is this. (*Time-bell rings*) Madam, I am concluding. Now, this has become a regular feature. Some people are now taking a long-range view. Why

don't the Central Government do like that ? In Orissa, for example, the scientists are trying to take a long-range view in regard to many social problems. They have come out with their views. Now, we, in the Government and in the various political parties, think only about the day-to day activities. I do not think we, politicians, have long-range views on several vital issues affecting the country. This is my opinion. I may be right. I may be wrong. What I am suggesting is that it is high time for the country to adopt a long-range approach towards the twin problem of drought and floods. I do not think it can emerge from a discussion in Parliament. I do not think it can emerge from a discussion in the Cabinet. This is because we are all politicians. We have our own limitations. Therefore, why don't you set up a Commission not of Parliament Members; I am not for that—of scientists ? Today, science has very much developed. We are talking about metereology and many other things. I do not know how far they can forecast about anything. I have my own doubts about it, but I do not want to go into that thing now. My point is, in Orissa, they have set up a Committee. It was initiated by the Institute of Social Sciences there. It is headed by one Prof. P. K. Das, who is a professor in that Institute. The scientists of that Institute and other institutes are now making a long-range study of the drought in Orissa to see how they can rebuild the entire economy, how they can help in tackling the drought situation and how they can contain or minimise the ravages caused by drought. Many people have come out with their views. These people have knowledge about it. They are not like you and me. We talk about all sorts of things in the world, under the Sun. We are just politicians, but these people are scientists. They know what to do in this area.

I would, therefore, suggest that you should set up a Commission of scientists working in the various disciplines. They will be able to tell us how a long-range scheme can be prepared to prevent or to contain or minimise the damage caused by drought and floods. This is an era of science. Politicians alone cannot solve this problem. Apart from giving immediate relief, the Central Government should seriously think about setting up a Commission. Don't dismiss this suggestion straightaway. You have your Planning Commission, of course, but it has its own limitations. They cannot tackle this sort of problem. This sort of problem can be tackled only by scientists. Seek the help of scientists, including economists, so that a long-range scheme can be prepared to give relief to the common people of this country. Otherwise, people will sell their children. Many people will leave the villages. Already, many people are migrating to the towns. I do not know what will happen to them in future. I do not know what will happen to our agriculture.

Nothing can be predicted if the situation is allowed to drift. So, the Central Government should think about it seriously. This is not a political issue. Repeatedly floods are coming and we have to do something about floods.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : You have taken a lot of time. I have got other names also.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : I am concluding. I have my own serious criticism about the Central Government that they are not serious, in the sense that they are not taking proper steps to prevent this fury of nature. The fury of nature will be there again, but how we can tackle the situation, that is the main point.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Shri Jaipal Reddy. May I, for refreshing the memory of the House, say that the Calling Attention means, a person, who calls the attention of the Government to a matter of public importance, can make a speech, but the rest of the people may please ask pointed questions so that I can accommodate more people ?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Andhra Pradesh) : No.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : What no, it is a part of the record.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : With your vast experience you are quite aware of the practices..

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : If you do not want to discuss any other business...

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : We are not discussing politics. It is a live issue.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : But your one hour speech is not going to solve the issue. If ten people give their points to the Minister, perhaps it will be solved better. I am not cutting down the time. I am allowing more people who are affected by drought. That is my contention. I want to accommodate more people.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY (Tamil Nadu) : We are also correctly following the conventions.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Good.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Madam, this year again we are witnessing the strange spectacle of floods devastating some parts of the country, and drought striking other parts of the country. Our Minister was good enough to refer to the encouraging meteorological forecast which said that there will be average to surplus rain, but the surplus rain does not appear to make sense for people who are facing terrible drought conditions. Every year we have been discussing both, the flood situation and the drought situation, in Parliament and it is high time that all of us together evolved an integrated, common approach towards this problem. I come from a severely drought-affected district in Andhra Pradesh, namely Mahboobnagar district. The day before yesterday a strange tragedy took place in Mahboobnagar district. A bus because of an accident fell into the Krishna river which was in spate and the Krishna river is flowing in Mahboobnagar which is suffering from drought. Alll the passengers in that bus met a tragic death. This is a strange demonstration of the odd phenomenon we are facing. I am told by my friends in Bihar that even where they are experiencing floods, they are facing drought conditions also. In North Bihar, I am told, a lot of damage has been caused by floods on account of heavy rainfall in Nepal and other areas, but in the very same North Bihar severe scarcity of drinking water is also being experienced. I do not want to mention all this, but I know our Minister of Agriculture, Shri Balram Jakharji who has vast experience in this area and who has genuine interest in this area. But he is from Punjab and I do not know whether he is fully conversant with the problems of farmers who suffer from drought.

1.00 P.M.

As I have said, in Andhra Pradesh there is a drought situation for a second year in a row, and Mahboobnagar district, from which I come, is experiencing unprecedented drought conditions for a second year in a row. As I have said, some of the districts, both in Telangana and Rayalaseema, are drought prone—they are so recognized by the Government of India too—and in a drought prone district if there is subnormal rainfall, the negative impact produced by this phenomenon is far more than in normal areas. Normally we go by statistical averages. "Oh ! we are less this year by 25 per cent", but we do not take the general condition of the area before we refer to these figures. I am sure our Minister will take note of this point.

In Andhra Pradesh the paddy area during 1992-93 decreased by 5.15 lakh hectares, and during 1993 the Government of Andhra Pradesh made a demand for the release of Rs. 645 crores. The Government of India has sent a team in the last week of May 1993. So far only around Rs 29. crores have been released and the Prime Minister, in a letter, indicated that Rs. 129 crores could be used but the money is to be drawn from various departments and the officials of the Government of Andhra Pradesh should keep knocking at the doors of various departments here. I think, if a certain amount has to be released, it should be released from a single point. The State Governments should not be made to run from pillar to post to get the money that has already been sanctioned.

I do not have to refer to the drinking water problem. But I must tell the hon. Minister that this is the worst drought that I have seen as a legislator during the last 24 years in my part of the country. I have been a legislator for 24 years and I am therefore stating with full sense of responsibility that this has been caused on account of excessive exploitation of the ground water potential. So there is a need also to see that we go in for legislation to regulate utilization of underground water. The Andhra Pradesh Government has been talking of it but it has not come forward with any piece of legislation. I think the Government of India should think of appointing an expert committee to see how ground water utilization can be regulated. In a normal year the entire ground water potential is overexploited, and if it is followed by a drought, then we are face to face with real famine conditions.

I do not have to draw attention to fodder scarcity. Some fodder is sought to be supplied to the farmers, but I should say that it was highly symbolic.

Madam, in the last session I had pointed out how in my district some starvation deaths were reported. Some small farmers committed suicide because of the distress created by the drought conditions.

We are all alive to the stark starvation deaths. We are not equally alive to the devastation caused by wide-spread malnutrition. The damage caused by floods is visible, while the devastation caused by drought is not so easily demonstrable, but it produces as much negative effect. As the Minister rightly pointed out, the effect could be even worse. Therefore, we should be alive to this situation.

I have got figures for my district. In 1992-93, if one goes by the percentage of the area on which paddy was transplanted, last year it was only 16 per cent of the normal, in the whole district. This year it is only 4 per cent of the normal. When I refer to the normal, I want the Minister again not to be taken in because the normal itself is abysmally low.

Coming to the dry areas, last year the normal was 45 per cent, and this year it is 17 per cent, and you can imagine the kind of situation we are facing. I have visited the area recently, and it was really heart-rending.

Last year when Palamau of Bihar was facing drought conditions, quite a few of us proposed that an all-party team of MPs should visit the area. I, therefore, suggest that an all-party team should be organised to visit some of these drought-affected areas including Mahaboobnagar, Anantapur and Cuddapah of Andhra Pradesh, Palamau of Bihar and other drought-stricken areas and also Kalahandi in Orissa. Last year this proposal was mooted. For some reasons it did not fructify. I would request the hon. Minister, Balram Jakharji, to take the initiative. Let an all-party team of MPs be exposed to the actual reality that has afflicted the people. Last year, of course, the Prime Minister was good enough to visit some parts of Bihar. I take this opportunity to request the Prime Minister also to visit the drought-affected parts of Andhra Pradesh including .....

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA (Karnataka): Where is the guarantee that all of you will give a unanimous report? Where is the guarantee that all of you will agree at least on drought?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: We have been so far unanimous in the JPC ... *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: We are unanimous on everything except Couvery. On Cauvery we will not be unanimous.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I am sure that an all-party MPs team will be unanimous in its perception of the drought conditions prevailing in various parts of the country. I think our hon. Minister will respond positively to this request. I would also request the Deputy Chairman to take the initiative in the matter.

The Minister in his reply referred to the Water-shed Development Programme in the dryland areas and soil-conservation works. May I tell the Minister that when he was the Speaker, if such routine references were made by Ministers, I remember, he used to find fault with the Ministers for making routine, ritual references. Therefore, I would request the Minister to avoid such routine references.

We referred to on-going Plan Programmes. We all know which are the drought-affected areas and which are drought-prone areas in the country. Why can't we embark upon a major programme with reference to both water-shed development programme and soil conservation works? Why are we taking it up in this routine fashion? There is a need for an extraordinary response and there is a need for the Minister to throw a new light in order to achieve a new breakthrough in this area.

RE: DEMAND TO CALL THE ATTORNEY GENERAL BEFORE THE HOUSE

श्री संघप्रिय गौतम (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभापति महोदया।

उपसभापती: क्या समस्या है आपकी।

श्री संघप्रिय गौतम: उपसभापति महोदया, मैं आपका ध्यान एक बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण समस्या की ओर दिलाकर प्रार्थना कर रहा हूँ। अभी पता लगा है कि लोकसभा में शाम को पांच बजे हमारे अटोर्नी जनरल साहब अपना दृष्टिकोण व्यक्त करने के लिए आ रहे है।

उपसभापति: किस विषय पर?

श्री संघप्रिय गौतम: इस विषय में कि मुख्य निर्वाचन आयोग के विवाद से जो एक संवैधानिक संकट खड़ा हुआ है, मेरी प्रार्थना यह है कि यह सदन भी उतना ही महत्वपूर्ण है। यदि अटोर्नी जनरल लोकसभा में आ रहे है और वहां अपना दृष्टिकोण व्यक्त करेंगे तो ऐसी व्यवस्था की जाए कि वह अपना दृष्टिकोण इस सदन में भी व्यक्त करें। यह जो संवैधानिक संकट उत्पन्न हुआ है, इसका हल होना नितान्त आवश्यक है। सारे चुनाव स्थगित कर दिए गए है, हमारे सदन में आने वाले सदस्य रोक दिए गए हैं। यही मेरी आपके द्वारा सारे सदन से प्रार्थना है कि उन्हें यहां भी आना चाहिए। ...(**व्यवधान**)। और सारे सदन को इसका समर्थन करना चाहिये।

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया (बिहार): महोदया, गौतम जी ने जो बात उठाई है, यह महत्वपूर्ण है और इस सदन का भी सवाल है। यहां तक सवाल यह है कि राज्यसभा की पश्चिम बंगाल की और गुजरात की इलेक्शन भी इलेक्शन कमीशन के थ्रू स्टोप की गई है। अगर वाकई आ रहे है उधर अटोर्नी जनरल कुछ अपना वक्तव्य रखने के लिए तो इस सदन का भी महत्व उतना ही है, इसलिए राज्यसभा में भी आकर वह अपना वक्तव्य रखें। .... (**व्यवधान**) ...।